

REMARKS

Claims 1-18 remain in the application. Claims 1 and 10 are in independent form. Claims 6, 10 and 11 have been amended.

First, the disclosure stands objected to because the Examiner indicates the informalities in paragraph 15, line 5, reference numeral "22" should be changed to "32". Applicant has amended the description of paragraph as suggest by the Examiner to correct the typographical error as noted.

Second, claims 6-9 stand objected to because of certain informalities indicated by the Examiner. Applicant has amended claim 6 to correctly set forth "outer panel includes a lip flange extending over said lower wall", as suggested by the Examiner.

Additionally, claims 10-12 stand rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Furubayashi et al. (US 4,838,606). The Examiner contends that Furubayashi et al discloses an inner structural panel 11 having a support surface 12 with a plurality of ribs 12a extending laterally along the support surface and a reinforcing panel 16 secured to the ribs to box the inner structural panel.

In response, Applicant has amended independent claim 10 to set forth an inner structural panel (26) for a tailgate assembly of a motor vehicle comprising: a support surface (34) having a plurality of spaced apart ribs (46) extending laterally ~~[[along]]~~ from said support surface (34) to a free distal end; and a reinforcing panel (64, 66) secured to said distal end of at least two of said plurality of ribs (46) to box said inner structural panel (26). Additionally, claim 11 has been amended to further set forth each of said plurality of ribs (46) includes a top flange (50) extending transverse from said distal end thereof for receiving said reinforcing panel (64, 66) therealong.

Furubayashi et al. does not disclose, teach or suggest a plurality of spaced apart ribs extending laterally from the support surface to a free distal end and a reinforcing panel secured to the distal ends of at least two of the ribs. Rather, Furubayashi et al. discloses and teaches only a single sinusoidal shaped body portion defined by parallel grooves 12a. The parallel grooves clearly can not be characterized as being spaced apart and extending transversely from the planar support surface to a free distal end wherein the free distal ends support and secure the reinforcing panel. Additionally, Furubayashi et al. clearly also does not disclose, teach or suggest each of the ribs including a flange extending transversely from the free distal end thereof for securing and supporting the reinforcing panel.

Therefore, amended claims 10 and 11 clearly distinguish Applicant's invention over the cited prior art and the rejection should be withdrawn.

Finally, claims 1-5 are indicated as being allowed and therefore remain the same. Claims 6-9 are indicated as being allowable if rewritten or amended to overcome the objections in the Office Action. And, claims 13-18 stand objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but are indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. In light of the amendments to claims 10 and 11 as set forth hereinabove, Applicant submits that claims 12-18 are also now in condition for allowance.

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Amdt dated March 2, 2005
Reply to Office action dated December 2, 2004

It is respectfully submitted that this patent application is in condition for allowance, which allowance is respectfully solicited. If the Examiner has any questions regarding this amendment or patent application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Asher', is written over a horizontal line.

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